

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

St. Louis Vehicle Emissions Inspections - Gateway Clean Air Program

Fact Sheet

4/2001

Division of Environmental Quality
Air Pollution Control Program

What is the Gateway Clean Air Program?

The Gateway Clean Air Program is part of Missouri's continuing efforts to improve the air quality in the St. Louis area. A major component of the program is a new, enhanced vehicle emissions test. The new test uses state-of-the-art technology and is designed to identify the total amount of emissions generated by today's computer-controlled vehicles under normal driving conditions. The outcome will be cleaner cars on the road and cleaner air to breathe.



How will the new vehicle emissions test program be different from the old one?

The test area has expanded to include Franklin County where, for the first time, vehicles are required to pass an improved basic (idle) test. A new, enhanced emissions test was introduced for residents of St. Louis City, St. Louis, Jefferson and St. Charles counties. The new test will simulate driving conditions by operating the vehicle on a treadmill during testing.

The Gateway Clean Air Program will also include RapidScreen, a new state-of-the-art remote sensing device, which monitors exhaust emissions while vehicles are driven on streets and highways. RapidScreen allows exceptionally clean-running vehicles to pass the new emissions test without visiting emissions test stations. Residents in all testing areas are eligible to RapidScreen. Vehicles that do not RapidScreen will receive a station-based test.

Under the Gateway Clean Air Program, emissions tests are performed every two years at specialized stations. These stations will not be allowed to repair vehicles. In Franklin County the improved basic (idle) test is performed annually.

Why is the Franklin County emissions test program different?

Franklin County has never had an emissions test program and joins efforts to reduce air pollution for the first time with the Gateway Clean Air Program. Franklin County residents may also take advantage of the new testing technology by testing at the enhanced test facilities once every two years instead of having the improved (idle) test annually. They may also RapidScreen, which is also valid for two years.



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Why is the St. Louis region changing its emissions test program?

Despite improvements in the air quality in the St. Louis region over the past 10 years, air pollution levels still exceed health-based standards. There are currently more than a million vehicles on St. Louis area roads. By the year 2005, we will be driving more than 53 million miles every weekday, compared to the 41 million miles we drive today.

Vehicle emissions are a major contributor to air pollution. Changing to the new enhanced inspection and maintenance program will help vehicles in the region run more efficiently and pollute less.

Where is the new test performed?

There are a total of 10 specialized stations performing the new, enhanced emissions test and several remote sensing vans throughout the region for RapidScreen. All stations are strategically located so that 80 percent of all motorists in the affected areas are within five miles of the nearest station. In Franklin County, in addition to two stationary stations, there are two mobile testing units.

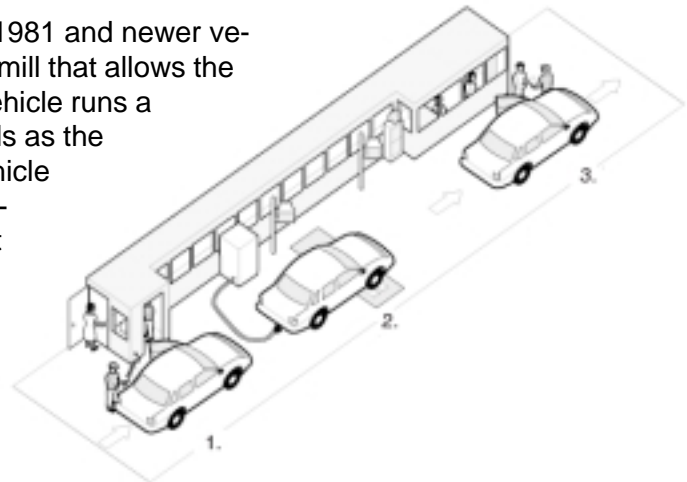
What is the procedure for the new enhanced test?

The procedure for the new enhanced test is a simple three-step process:

Step one - the vehicle information is taken, the driver goes to a waiting area, and the vehicle is given a gas cap test.

Step two - emissions test performed. Most 1981 and newer vehicles are placed on a dynamometer-a treadmill that allows the vehicle to run at normal road speeds. The vehicle runs a "drive trace" through higher and lower speeds as the exhaust is collected and analyzed. Each vehicle tested follows the same drive trace. Most vehicles will pass the test under 90 seconds at speeds less than 30 miles per hour. However, the maximum speed reached can be 58 miles per hour.

Step three - all vehicles receive a Missouri Vehicle Emissions Test Report. A diagnostic trace report is issued to vehicles failing the test or if on-board diagnostics codes are present.



In Franklin County, the improved basic (idle) test will be performed. This test measures carbon monoxide (CO) and hydrocarbons (HC).

Is this test safe for vehicles?

Yes, the enhanced test is a shorter version of the test that the federal government requires all new vehicles sold in the United States to pass. The entire procedure will take about 10 minutes, but the drive time is usually 4 minutes or less.

Will the new emissions test hurt a vehicle's performance?

No. Vehicles that fail the test and are repaired often show improved gas mileage and drivability. In today's modern cars, the emissions system is an integral part of the overall performance of the vehicle. Tuning up the emissions system can only have a positive impact on vehicle performance. The best guideline for passing a vehicle emissions test is to maintain the vehicle to the manufacturer's specifications.

What makes this enhanced test high-tech?

The new enhanced test uses the most up-to-date technology available. Because it is much more advanced in identifying vehicle failures, vehicles receiving the test will only have to be tested every two years. The new enhanced test is the highest quality and most thorough procedure offered today.

What does the new emissions test measure?

The enhanced emissions test measures vehicle emissions under a wide range of driving speeds and simulates normal conditions, such as acceleration and deceleration, highway and in-town driving.

The test also measures carbon monoxide (CO), hydrocarbons (HC) and nitrogen oxides (NOx). These are gasses that are not visible; therefore, motorists may be polluting more than they should and not even be aware. Additionally, the gas cap is checked to ensure that fuel vapor does not escape.

Vehicles of model years 1996 and newer will undergo an On-Board Diagnostics (OBD) procedure. This is designed specifically for computer-controlled cars and monitors emissions control systems. Should there be any problems with the on-board diagnostics, a Repair Diagnostic Report will be printed to help your automotive repair technician repair your vehicle. The OBD test is advisory only. Each vehicle will be tested to meet a standard appropriate to its model year and vehicle type.

Who will test vehicles at the specialized stations?

Certified inspectors, who have completed over 60 hours of training, will test your vehicle. Training includes driving several types of vehicles, including manual and automatic transmissions.

Why can't service stations, repair facilities and dealerships still perform emissions tests?

Vehicles today are more complicated and repairing them requires specialized training. The Gateway Clean Air Program requires large, heavy, high-tech equipment. This equipment meets laboratory standards and is frequently calibrated. By providing a centralized test system, the consumer pays less for testing, and the automotive repair technicians can focus on what they do best: repairing vehicles.

Which vehicles are required to undergo an emissions test?

Most 1971-and-newer model vehicles registered or primarily operated in the City of St. Louis, St. Charles, Jefferson, St. Louis and Franklin counties will be tested under the Gateway Clean Air Program. All local, state, and federal government owned vehicles in these areas are required to undergo a new test as well.

Which vehicles are exempt from the program?

The two newest model year vehicles will be exempt from testing. For example, in 2000, model 1999 and 2000 vehicles will be exempted. In addition, those vehicles of model years 1970 and older will be exempt from all testing. Diesel, propane or other alternate fuel vehicles will remain exempt, as will motorcycles and vehicles with gross weights over 8,500 pounds.

What happens if a required vehicle is not tested?

Registration will be denied, and new license plates will not be issued for the vehicle.

What happens when a vehicle passes the test?

The owner of the vehicle can then register the vehicle, provided it has also passed a safety inspection. Continued maintenance, including tune-ups and fuel system checks, is a good idea. This will keep the vehicle performing at peak efficiency during the two years until the next test, thus saving energy and reducing air pollution.

What happens when a vehicle fails the test?

The station inspector will provide the owner with a report containing detailed test results. Emission-related repairs will need to be made to the vehicle prior to a retest, for which there is no additional charge anytime within 30 days of the first test. If the repaired vehicle fails the retest, the owner can apply for a waiver for the current test cycle.

What is a waiver, and who is eligible to receive one?

It is best for your fuel economy and our air quality to repair your vehicle to pass the test. However a waiver can be issued to motorists if they spend a predetermined dollar amount on repairs. The minimum dollar amounts for a waiver will breakdown as follows:

Enhanced Area

- \$75 for model years 1971 to 1980
- \$200 for model years 1981 to 1996
- \$450 for model years 1997 and newer

Franklin County

- \$75 for model years 1971 to 1980
- \$200 for model years 1981 and newer

Repairs must be appropriate for the failure. It is important to remember that a failing vehicle will not be required to spend the entire waiver amount if repairs bring the vehicle "up to standards." A waiver will be issued only if all requirements are met, based on the waiver inspection at the vehicle emissions testing station.

How many waivers can a motorist receive for the same vehicle?

If a vehicle keeps failing the test and if the motorist continues making attempts to repair it, the vehicle can qualify for a waiver each time it's tested. There is no limit on the number of waivers issued, but the minimum waiver amount must be spent for the model year of the vehicle each test cycle.

Where can motorists take their vehicle for repairs if it fails the emissions test?

To any repair technician they choose. When a vehicle fails, a Repair Facility Performance Report (RFPR) is given to its driver. The RFPR rates the actual emissions repair performance of each business that employs recognized repair technicians. The Repair Facility Performance Report is available at test stations. Charges for parts count towards a waiver; however, only labor charges for Missouri Recognized Repair Technicians (MRRTs) will count towards a waiver. In Franklin County, only labor charges for Missouri Qualified Repair Technicians (MQRTs) will count towards a waiver.

Who are Missouri Recognized Repair Technicians and Missouri Qualified Repair Technicians?

Missouri Recognized Repair Technicians (MRRTs) are certified by the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) in Electrical Systems (A6), Engine Performance (A8) and Advanced Engine Performance (L1). Technicians must also satisfactorily complete a 4-hour Gateway Clean Air Program course approved by the state. In Franklin County, Missouri Qualified Repair Technicians (MQRTs) are ASE A6 and A8 qualified only.

How much will repairs cost?

Repair costs will vary based on the model and year of a vehicle and what is not functioning properly to cause excessive emissions.

Who pays for any needed repairs?

Vehicle warranties may cover many of the needed repairs. Vehicle manufacturers are required to provide warranties for emission-related equipment. If a warranty or manufacturer's recall campaign does not apply, the motorist is responsible for repair costs.

Is assistance with repair costs offered by the state?

Yes! The Gateway Clean Air Program offers assistance to motorists who qualify in the affected areas. Financial support will be given to help pay for repairs for vehicles that do not pass the new emissions inspection test.

Only the emissions-related repairs on vehicles that have failed will be eligible for reimbursement. A limited number of grants for up to \$450 per vehicle will be issued through a stringent application process under the Vehicle Emissions Repair Assistance Project. Repair technicians recognized by the State of Missouri must perform repairs. Gateway Clean Air Program stations have additional information.

What happens after a vehicle is repaired?

After repairs have been made, a repair data form must be completed and the vehicle re-tested. If the vehicle passes when re-tested, the vehicle may then be registered. If it fails a second time, efforts to try to bring the vehicle into compliance must continue or all waiver requirements must be met.

How do motorists know when to have vehicles tested?

Vehicle registration papers will continue to arrive in the mail to notify motorists when to have an emissions test performed. Vehicles with an even model year will be tested in even years, and those with an odd model year will be tested in odd years. All vehicles regardless of model year must be tested at any title transfer, such as when buying a used car.

What is the cost of the new enhanced emissions test?

The enhanced emissions test fee is \$24 every two years in all counties affected except Franklin County, where the fee will be \$10.50 annually. The test is performed once every two years except in Franklin County, where the test is performed annually. Franklin County residents can choose to test every two years using St. Louis City, Jefferson, St. Louis or St. Charles counties' test stations and pay the \$24 fee.

RapidScreen, an alternative to stationary emissions testing, costs the same as the enhanced emissions test, \$24 per test. All vehicles subject to emissions testing will be eligible for RapidScreen.

Is the test fee reduced if I have to wait a long time for the test?

Missouri law (643.350, RSMo) provides motorists in the enhanced test area (City of St. Louis and St. Louis, St. Charles and Jefferson counties) immediate relief if they have waited more than a certain amount of time before the test process starts. If a motorist has waited in line for more than 30 minutes, the fee will be reduced by \$10; if a motorist has waited more than 60 minutes, the fee will be reduced by \$20. **Please note -- these fee reductions do not apply during the last three testing days of the month.**

Wait time fee reductions do not apply in Franklin County because Franklin County's program is governed by a different state law (307.366, RSMo).

What if a motorist purchases a used vehicle and it fails the new emissions test?

The dealer may choose to test the vehicle prior to the sale and provide the motorist with the emissions test certificate or a waiver. If the dealer chooses not to provide such a certificate, and the owner gets the vehicle tested within 10 days or 1000 miles of the purchase date, should the vehicle fail the emission test, the owner may return it to the dealer for repairs needed to get it to pass the emission test (no waiver allowed). If the dealer cannot get the vehicle to pass the emission test, the dealer must reach another agreement with the vehicle owner. Sales by private individuals (not registered dealers) are not covered by these requirements.

Are safety inspections still be required?

Yes, safety inspections are required once every two years on the same even-odd schedule as the emissions test. Also, you have the option of registering for two years. If you keep the same car, the safety, emissions and registration are only required every two years!

Have other states implemented the enhanced test procedure?

Yes! Under the 1990 Federal Clean Air Act Amendments, other metropolitan areas in 15 states are implementing enhanced emissions tests as part of their plans to meet anti-pollution deadlines. Many such programs are already running successfully and making major improvements in air quality. These metropolitan areas include the Illinois portion of the St. Louis metropolitan area, which implemented a very similar system in 1999. Some other states with similar testing programs include Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, Colorado and Arizona.

Who do I contact for more information?

Call the Gateway Clean Air Program toll-free at 1-888-748-1AIR or visit our Web site at www.gatewaycleanair.com.

The Gateway Clean Air Program is a program of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.